2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

243 cultivation. However, it probably also serves to strengthen the outside rows against the wind, and Tepoztecans believe that it protects the inside of the milpa.

In the more fertile lands which are in the hotter and lower portions of the municipio, it is customary to hill all the plants because the corn grows so fast that a third cultivation with oxen would damage the tall plants. The hilling of each plant requires much more labor, and therefore necessitates more capital when *peones* are hired for the job. In areas within the municipio such as Calamatlán, where this hilling is done, the process is referred to as *una tierra y medio cajón*, that is, one cultivation followed by hilling. The hilling is believed to safeguard the tall plants against the winds.

527 The termination of cultivation is known as the *acabada* and is celebrated by a fiesta in the fields and at home. This generally occurs toward mid-August. Im-
243 mediately after the last hilling, some Tepoztecans walk around the milpa and re-
[788] cite a speech. The following is a typical speech.
[534]

Now I have fulfilled my obligation of attending and cultivating you as you deserve. Now if you do not want to produce, that is your responsibility. For my part I now retire.

[778] A wooden cross is sometimes put in the center of the milpa after the last row
[264] is cultivated and prayers and religious songs are said by the owner. Fireworks are set off and bread and cheese, tequila and *ponche* are served to the workers and others present. The oxen are decorated with flowers, generally dahlias, tulips, and banana leaves, and a picture of San Isidro. After celebrating in the milpa the oxen are driven home, where there is more food and drink for the *peones*, the family, and any *compadres* and friends who may be invited. Tamales, rice, tortilla, *mole*
[264] *verde*, and drinks of *ponche* are plentiful, and firecrackers are set off in the patio.

243 The last cultivation and its celebration are generally over by late August. There follows a long period during which relatively little is done in the cornfields. During this time the farmers harvest their *ciruela* crops, which ripen in early
[245] September.

[527] Toward the end of September the fresh corn is ready in the fields, and families
[778] turn out to the milpas to roast corn and to drink *ponche*. On September 28, the day
[788] of Saint Miguel, the farmers carry a cross made of *pericón*, which has been blessed by the priest, and they place it on the four sides of the milpa to protect it against
[82] strong winds which often blow at this time. It is an old belief that if the winds
[789] blow strong and the corn is damaged it is because the dancers who represent El Tepozteco at the fiesta on September 8 did not perform properly. While this
[776] explanation is widely known, few still believe it. Another old idea is that the wind is caused by the angels spreading their wings.

During October the weeding of the milpa with machete is done wherever necessary. A milpa of ten or twelve *cuartillos* can generally be done by a man in one or two days. After that there is a long period when no work in the milpa is
[245] done. During this time farmers continue to pick their *ciruelas*, look after their animals, cut wood, and do other tasks around the house.

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

occupation. The informant worked for ten days: three days in felling trees and cutting up the wood, one day in collecting the wood at one spot, one day in making the kiln, four days and nights in watching the kiln, and one day in taking off the dirt and putting the charcoal into sacks. The yield was 18 sacks or 9 *cargas* of charcoal. Each *carga* sold at 13 pesos, yielding 117 pesos. From this sum the informant had to pay 2 pesos a *carga* for transportation to Cuernavaca and 1½ pesos a *carga* for tax, totaling 31½ pesos, leaving him 85½ pesos for ten days' work. Since daily wages in agriculture at the time were about 4½ pesos, the income from charcoal is considered good in Tepoztlán. But charcoal burning is thought of as dirty work, and it ranks very low in prestige, being identified as a last occupational resort of the poor. Nevertheless, some well-to-do families in the outlying barrios spend part of their time in burning charcoal.

Until 1947, most of the charcoal in Tepoztlán was transported by burro to Yautepec. Since that time the bus line has agreed to transport charcoal, so that much of it now goes to Cuernavaca. The price of transport in 1948 was 2 pesos a *carga*. Occasionally a truck from Mexico City or Cuernavaca comes into Tepoztlán to transport charcoal.

CIRUELAS—HOG PLUMS

The *ciruela* is now an important cash crop in Tepoztlán, and according to informants it was introduced into Tepoztlán in 1865. There was little interest until it was discovered that the *ciruela* was pleasant to eat, and more trees were planted.

The *ciruela* can be easily propagated by cuttings. All that is necessary is to prepare a hole some 30 x 30 cms. wide and about 70 cms. deep and to place in it a branch from the mother tree—a branch 2 to 3 meters long and 5 to 10 cms. in diameter. The hole is then filled with soil and tightly packed. Cuttings may be made at any time of the year with good results. The only precaution necessary is to see that the cuttings are not disturbed while they are rooting, lest the young roots be broken. The trees begin producing in from 3 to 4 years, and production increases as the trees grow. Trees grow to a huge size. (See Fig. 32.)

Ciruelas first became a cash crop in Tepoztlán about 1901, or shortly after the railroad was built through the municipio. But transporting the *ciruelas*, by mule to the railroad and then by rail to Mexico City, incurred great expense and delay. Irregular train schedules often caused the fruit to spoil. After the highway was built, merchants from Mexico City and Cuernavaca sent their trucks to Tepoztlán during harvest, and the cash crop value of the *ciruelas*, transported in this way, increased. They are packed in wooden boxes known as *guacales*. Each *guacal* contains about nine gross of *ciruelas*. The price of a *guacal* in October, 1943, was six pesos. It is estimated that Tepoztlán exports about 7,000 *guacales* a year, a total crop value of about 42,000 pesos.

Prices are fixed by merchants from Cuernavaca and Mexico City. The merchants get together and decide among themselves what they will pay per gross for the fruit. Mexico City is the principal market.

2;Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

245 433 621

A survey of the numbers of *ciruela* trees in the village by barrio is shown in Table 42.

TABLE 42. Estimate of Number of *Ciruela* Trees, Average Yield, and Value of Harvest, 1944.

Barrio	No. of Trees	Average Yield per Tree in *Guacales*	No. of *Guacales*	Crop Value in Pesos
San Pedro	86	4	344	2,064
San Sebastián	127	4	508	3,048
Los Reyes	377	4	1,508	9,048
Santa Cruz (small)	153	4	612	3,672
Santa Cruz (large)	139	4	556	3,336
San Miguel	411	4	1,644	9,864
Santo Domingo	633	4	2,532	15,192
La Santísima	595	4	2,380	14,280
Tepoztlán	2,521			60,504

245 435

There has been a notable increase in the price of *ciruelas* since 1926, as can be seen from Table 43.

TABLE 43. *Ciruela* Prices, 1926–1943.

Year	Price per Gross, in Pesos [a]	
	Commercially Ripened	Tree Ripened [b]
1926	.12	
1927	.12	
1928	.13	
1929	.14	
1930	.15	
1931	.17	
1932	.20	
1933	.20	
1934	.23	
1935	.25	
1936	.25	
1937	.20	.30
1938	.20	.35
1939	.30	.40
1940	.30	.50
1941	.40	.60
1942	.50	.70
1943	.60	.80

[a] The average of the prices recorded during the harvest season for each year. Prices are highest at the beginning of the harvest and in the middle of August; they decline as the production increases until the end of the harvest, about the middle of November.

[b] Until 1937, nearly all tree-ripened *ciruelas* were used for home consumption and for hogs.

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

Fig. 32. Picking hog plums.

ROPEMAKING

Ropemaking, like charcoal burning, is limited to the smaller upper barrios of the village, and is concentrated in the barrio of San Sebastián where ten families engage in this occupation during the dry slack season. All of these families are in the lower economic level of the village, so ropemaking is also an occupation of the poor.

According to local tradition, ropemaking was introduced into the village about 1883 by a man from Ajuchitlán who came to live in the barrio of San Sebastián.[a] It is interesting that in all the years since then, there has been little spread of ropemaking to other parts of the village, and there has been little change in the techniques employed, except that the ropes have become much longer. In 1890 ropes only 12 varas long were made. Now Tepoztecans make ropes 24 and 30 varas long.

Ropemaking is a family affair; it takes two or three persons for the major operation, twisting. Most of the *ixtle* fiber is obtained from the maguey plants which grow on the *cerros* of the communal lands. But only about half of the families who make rope gather their own *ixtle* fiber; the others buy it.

The maguey plant is beaten with a special tool which breaks up the plant so that the fibers can be extracted. The fiber is then soaked overnight. The fiber is spun on a simple spinning device and is then ready for the rope twisting process. This is done on a rather complicated homemade device shown in Fig. 33.

[a] Although we have no evidence as to whether ropemaking as it is now known existed in pre-Hispanic Tepoztlán, it is probable that some type of cordage was known and used in connection with weaving.

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

we have money we eat, when we don't, we don't" is an oft-heard statement. The leanest part of the year for the majority are the three or four months preceding the harvest. During this time, many families are reduced to minimum quantities of tortilla, beans, and chile as steady fare or even merely *tortilla con sal* (with salt).

Before fiestas many families pull in their belts and eat less in order to sell their corn, beans, eggs, and chickens to get cash for new clothing, for the fiesta meal, and for spending money. The best eating occurs just after the harvest, and on fiesta days when *mole* made with chicken or turkey and rice and beans is served. Other irregularities of consumption are due to the seasonal availability of fruits and vegetables. Also, if the family trees produce poor *ciruelas*, papayas, or wormy mangos, it means that the family goes without these foods. The locally grown oranges, grapefruits, and lemons are normally inferior in quality and quantity.

Meat consumption rises during the dry winter months when pasture is scarce and cattle are slaughtered. Eggs are generally eaten only by men, especially during the planting season when work is most intense. Chicken and turkey are delicacies which are reserved for fiestas, weddings, baptisms, and birthdays. With the exception of the wedding feast, which is socially obligatory and served by rich and poor alike, many families must forego serving fiesta meals, sometimes for years on end, and partake of them only when invited by other families. Game is not eaten extensively, and the few men who hunt do so only when there is no other work, mostly during the dry season.

The correlation between diet and wealth is a positive one, in that the wealthier a family is the better it tends to eat. Its meals are larger and contain more variety throughout the year. But differences in the diet of the rich and poor consist principally in differences in the amount of food eaten, and in the relative frequency with which a family can afford to eat the more desirable of the locally known food types. There are no class differences in food quality, in food types, or in ways of preparing dishes. The better-to-do have no special recipes, no unusual ways of cooking, no exotic foods which are unknown to the poor.

Many of the wealthier families, because of custom and habits of thrift, do not always eat the newer foods, such as bread or canned fish, nor do they necessarily indulge in luxuries like milk, eggs, chicken, sweets, fruits not locally produced, or out-of-season foods except for fiestas. In fact, it is commonly said in Tepoztlán that the rich are too miserly to eat any better than the poor. Whatever the reason, there is an underlying homogeneity in type of foods eaten; and if all families were equal financially, there would be much more uniformity in diet than at present. It is not wealth, but education or degree of acculturation, which is beginning to create real differences in diet.

Tepoztecan families normally eat three meals a day, although many remember eating only twice a day before and during the Revolution, because of poverty. It is seldom that the entire family eats together, and often there are no fixed hours for meals. The father and older sons eat together in the morning before they go to the fields and in the evening when they return. If the field is at a great distance, the